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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

SATURDAY, April 13, 1940.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "BUILDING OUT RAIN." Information from the U. S. Forest Service, U.S.D.A.

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April showers bring May flowers. But that's not all. April showers may bring leaks in the roof, water stains under windows, streaks on the walls, or even decay in the wood of your house. Whether rain does damage to your home or not depends on how your home was built.

You don't have to be an architect, or builder, or even a carpenter to understand a few simple but important construction features that make a house safe from rain. Even if you are just a homebody and never even drove a nail in your life, you can understand the important points about building against the rain. Then when you buy or build a new house, or when you remodel a house, you can insist on having it "rainproof", so to speak.

Wood scientists of the U. S. Forest Service have done considerable research on problems of wood building to withstand rain. As you might guess, they say the roof is most important--both the material of the roof and the construction. They say false economies in building a roof are disastrous. Whatever type of roofing you use, be sure it is the best of its kind. If you are making your roof of wood shingles, insist on edge-grain, all-heartwood shingles. They'll make a roof that will last and hold out for years against rain and weather. Flat-grain shingles cost less, but they are more likely to curl and split, to shrink more, and suffer more from weather. Forest Service scientists state plainly that lower grades of wood shingles for the roof of any house, high-cost or low-cost, are not economical in the long run. But lower-grade shingles are all right for side walls or for temporary buildings.

A roof that lasts over the years and does not leak needs not only good material but also good construction. Leaks in corners or "valleys" of the roof are hard to locate and expensive to repair. So the scientists advise using those long curved pieces of metal that fit in such places--metal flashings, builders call them. These flashings keep water from seeping in at grooves and corners.

Besides flashings every good roof needs gutters and downspouts large enough to carry off all the water. And these gutters and downspouts need outlets large enough to carry off all the water. Every sound roof is built so that water will run off immediately and will not stand on, or in, or under the wood construction. If you don't have enough gutters or downspouts, your roof may give all kinds of trouble--leaks, decay, falling plaster or stained walls, paint trouble, or even damp basements.

But important as a sound roof is in keeping your house safe from rain, the sides of the house also must keep out rain. Any piece of wood that stands out from the wall may act like a dam and catch water unless it is built so water will go over the top. You can see how water that backs up and seeps in behind the wood may cause the wood to rot or stain the walls inside the house. The wood scientists say if a horizontal piece of wood must go on the wall of a house, use only wood treated so it resists decay, and overlap the horizontal piece or put on a strip of metal to turn off water. The first cost of good metal flashings may seem high, but in the end it will save far more costly repairs. Weak spots in the side of a house are often the door and window frames, because they penetrate all the protective layers and are like a dam to catch the downhill flow of water. A window frame that does not pitch away or have its top overlapped by the siding is sure to cause trouble.

To keep rain from getting in around windows the scientists advise a simple metal apron set under the window frame. This metal will turn off moisture that otherwise may leak through and around the window sill. The metal apron costs

little, does not show in the finished building, and may save you much worry and expensive repairs. On the inside the metal is turned up, and on the outside down, so that any moisture that gets in must get out.

The wood scientists suggest that sapwood usually decays more easily than heartwood. But you can use wood with sapwood in it on the side of the house if the house is built so that it turns off moisture. But if there are cracks on corners of the house, say, or if mouldings along the bottom catch rain--if the sidings do not fit in close to the corner boards, then the rain will beat in and be slow to dry out. Paint and decay troubles are likely to follow.

You can understand these points about building against rain much better from pictures than from just hearing about them. So instead of telling you any more, I'm going to suggest a free publication that will give you all these points and many more in words and pictures. This is a booklet written by the wood scientists of the U. S. Forest Service. It is called "Use and Abuse of Wood in House Construction." That's a long name but well worth remembering--"Use and Abuse of Wood in House Construction." If you prefer to order by number, this is Miscellaneous Publication No. 358. As long as the supply lasts you are welcome to a free copy. Just write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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